DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 314 860 EA 021 569

AUTHOR Gips, Crystal J.
TITLE Women's Ways: A Model for Leadership in Democratic Schools.
PUB DATE Nov 89
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of States on Inservice Education (San Antonio, TX, November 17-21, 1989).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Organization; *Democratic Values; Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; *Females; Inservice Education; *Leadership Qualities; *Principals; School Organization; *Sex Differences
IDENTIFIERS *Effective Schools Research

ABSTRACT

Traditionally, the schools' role has been to transform children from players to workers by teaching them to relinquish pleasurable activity in and of itself in favor of obtaining pleasure from achievement from the end results. Advocates for greater democracy, however, believe that education for citizenship can only be achieved through a child's active (and pleasurable) participation in the learning process. Effective schools research identifies principals as important influences on student learning. This paper suggests two research directions to help clarify principals' thinking and actions determining school structure. The education field already contains a large pool of potential school leaders (women) whose personal ways of thinking about teaching, learning, and their own roles quite naturally support a democratic approach to schooling. The paper explores women's accounts of their own career development as it differs from men's accounts and differences between women's and men's ways of thinking. Although women have earned more than half the educational administration degrees in recent years, the number of women in school leadership positions is disproportionately small. Data collected from the "Executive Educator" 1988 Outstanding Administrator Competition indicated numerous career development differences between men and women. Carol Gilligan's study of women and girls shows that women tolerate rules more easily, are more willing to make excceptions and accept innovation, are less competitive, and make more compassionately based moral judgments than men. In sum, women's emphasis on human relationships, care, responsibility, equity, fairness, intimacy, and cooperation comprise the essence of a democratic community. Women principals holding these values and constructing their roles accordingly promise a learning structure and content far different from traditional (male) schooling. (Nine references) (MLH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED314860

Women's Ways: A Model for Leadership in Democratic Schools

by

Crystal J. Gips

Associate Professor
College of Education
Ohio University
Athens, Ohio 45701

Presented at the
Annual Conference of the
National Council of States on Inservice Education
November 1989
San Antonio, TX

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Crystal J. Gips

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 021 569

Women's Ways: A Model for Leadership in Democratic Schools

As the decade of the 1980s comes to a close, we are able to recount more instances of the criticism of public education than ever before experienced in this nation. What is striking, however, is that few of the commentators on the plight of education have spoken seriously to issues of either organizational structure or the nature of leadership in the schools. Few have suggested that we examine the underlying values we hold about education and more specifically the ways in which we play out those values through the organization of our public schools and the priorities of school leaders. Virtually none of the critics have even attempted to explore the impact of school structure and leadership on learning outcomes for students.

One must give Former Secretary of Education William Bennett some credit for calling for an upgrading of the leadership contingent in the public schools. He accused educational administrators of protecting the status quo (including themselves), afraid to set and uphold standards, and lacking in both academic and managerial competence. However, one cannot help but notice that his words from the bully pulpit contained little in the way of insight into the kind of people and the kind of thinking that would be required to produce change in the schools. He, like others, has called for more of what seems to have gotten us into our present predicament.

It is noteworthy that few of the critics or the reports of the decade linked the nature of school leadership with the shape of the educational organization. While Ted Sizer (*Horace's Compromise* and others) has recommended restructuring of secondary schools in America and has successfully encouraged a number of schools to model his vision, even he has had little to say about the possible causal link between the actual nature of the individuals who lead our schools and the formal organizational patterns of those schools.

The impact of school structure on students and their learning has been addressed by a small group of persons who are concerned not only about the transmission of an accepted body of knowledge which ostensibly represents our culture but also about the use of knowledge and skills to be participants in a truly democratic society (Giroux, 1983; Gutman, 1987; Stevens and Wood, 1987). They have argued that both what students know and the ways in which they operate with that knowledge as citizens of our communities and our country are the products of their school experience. These educators have worked assiduously at an explication of the impact of structure on knowledge: They argue that both the organizational structure of the learning environment and the structure of the learning process have controlling effects on what students learn.

In practical terms, organizations like the Institute for Democracy in Education at Ohio University have been developed to promote reform in the structure of teaching and learning within the classroom. They have focused their efforts on teacher study of both content and methodology which involves students in the development of a community of learners who share in the definition of what is to be learned and how it is to be learned with a major consideration in their deliberations being the impact of their learning on themselves and other members of their community. Through this process they learn to value the development of common academic skills (writing, computation, etc.) and the acquistion of knowledge because it proves useful to them in their efforts to affect their own lives and the lives of others in their world through the application of that knowledge and skill in activities with recognizable outcomes.

Observation suggests that we have long accepted the school's role in helping children to move from players to workers by teaching them to give up their expectations for pleasure from activity itself in favor of obtaining pleasure from achievement, from the end results (Neff, 1983). Those who see a need for greater democracy in education have a different view of the role of education. Their efforts at democratization are based

on the belief that the most important outcomes of schooling--if we accept the notion that schools' primary responsibility is the education of children for citizenship--can be gained only through being a participant in the learning process rather than being a recipient of a finished amount of material to be learned. To follow this line of thinking would lead one to the conclusion that in fact pleasure is gained through the struggle of participation, not just from the outcome. Thus the outcome itself is different, perhaps more critical to an effective citizen of a community, and at the same time more pleasurable because of the participation.

This line of thinking has implications for teachers and learners. According to Neff (1983) the childlike pleasure in activity is natural, and its replacement with pleasure in outcomes must be learned. One might use this concept to explain the failure of many children to *like school* after the primary grades; we have taken away their source of pleasure and for those who are not very successful in school, taken away the opportunity to achieve it by locating it where they never arrive--in correct outcomes. Then teachers, principals, parents, and the public all cry about chilren's lack of motivation for academic activities.

If we value the development of a priority on learning of skills for participation in a democratic society, and if we agree that the structure of the educational program in general and the classroom learning activities more specifically have an impact on what students learn, then we must explore those fctors which impact upon the structure of the school. Research on effective schools inevitably identifies the principal as an important actor in the school drama: That research points to activities of the principal as determiners of student learning. Thus it seems appropriate to investigate those variables which have an impact on the way in which principals contribute to the organizational and educational structure of the school.

The purpose of this paper is to suggest two lines of research which might help to clarify principals' thinking and actions which determine what schools look like as organizations. Specifically the paper will present a line of thinking which suggests that the field of education already contains a large pool of potential school leaders whose personal ways of thinking about teaching and learning and about their own role in that process could quite naturally support a democratic approach to schooling. In short, that pool of potential school leaders is made up of women, and the research focuses on women's accounts of their own career development as it differs from men's accounts (Gips, 1989) and on assessments of women's ways of thinking as differentiated from men's ways of thinking (Gilligan, 1982).

Both of these areas of research suggest that the presence of significant differences between both content and process in the thinking of men and women may be the basis for different expectations for school organization and management, and for learning outcomes and processes. This position does not imply, however, that women presently as a group provide a different kind of leadership in schools from what men provide. While one can point to the approaches of individual school principals, for example, and perhaps even tally up men and their styles and women and their styles, and come to a conclusion which is entirely dependent upon the individuals one can name at the moment, another factor may provide the clearest explanation of the similarity of men and women presently in positions of school leadership. That factor is our propensity to select persons like ourselves to bring into the already existent cadre (Valverde, 1974): Since most school administrators are men, they choose new entrants into the administrative ranks who are most like themselves. Generally they choose men, obviously. In those cases where they invite women to join the group, they select women who come at least close to fitting in; while they may not look like the men, they must at least have the same visions of and values about schooling. And in order to gain access to positions of school leadership (as well as for other reasons) some women have adopted enough male thinking patterns to make themselves acceptable applicants. Some have

continued in the footsteps of their male predecessors, and others have followed their female tendencies and done something quite different in their provision of educational leadership. One factor is clear: women have emerged from the pack as outstanding leaders at a rate 5 times that of men. This may well be because their approach to school leadership has been particularly feminine.

Research on Administrative Careers in Education

Each year *The Executive Educator*, the publication of the National School Boards Association, conducts a competition and names 100 school administrators as outstanding among their peers in the U.S. A review of the group identified in the February 1988 edition of *The Executive Educator* revealed an anomaly as a sample of current school leaders throughout the country: 50% of the outstanding educational leaders were women. That this even split between men and women in the group who emerged as the best among school administrators was so unrepresentative of the school administrator population at large pointed to an area for study. While there is ample data to demonstrate the scarcity of women in positions of leadership in our public schools, and much work has been done to uncover the underlying causes for women's disproportionately low representation in the administrative ranks, we still do not know exactly what goes on to encourage men to become administrators in far greater numbers than women. And certainly with the disproportionate numbers, the fact that 50% of those named were women suggests that women had emerged, at least for the panel of distinguished judges, as outstanding in their roles.

More than half of the advanced degrees in educational administration have been awarded to women in recent years. Yet the number of women in positions of leadership in the public schools is disproportionately small. Women hold approximately 10% of the line leadership positions in school districts--5% of superintendencies and secondary school principalships, and about 20% of elementary principalships (NAESP,1988). While a 1987 survey of hiring practices for secondary school assistant principals revealed that 20% of the positions filled in the state of Ohio in that year were won by women (Gips, 1988), the present numbers of women in leadership positions are far from approaching the proportion of women in the teaching ranks: Women hold approximately one-half of the secondary teaching positions, and nearly all the elementary positions, for a total of approximately 67% of all teaching positions.

Data collected from the 1988 Outstanding Educators indicated several differences between men and women with respect to the development of their careers. Among those differences were:

1. Significantly more females (54%) held staff positions, such as curriculum supervisor, before appointment to a line position, such as principal, than did men (16%).

2. Women in the study indicated more years of experience in education on the whole than did the men. The women had been in the field of education longer, began teaching at a younger age, taught longer prior to their first administrative role, and were older when they received their first administrative appointment. It appears that women demonstrated their leadership capacity more fully before they moved to a leadership position.

3. Men and women displayed different patterns of career interruptions. Educational interruptions (full-time attendance at graduate school) were reported by 14% and 10% of men and women respectively, although only the men described themselves as teaching assistants, graduate associates, or research associates. This suggests that men were provided with opportunities for close contacts with highly successful members of the professional system they eventually joined. On the other hand, 20% of the women reported at least one overseas teaching appointment, which may indicate a willingness to go astray of the normal career pattern.

4. Another factor implies that men were more frequently groomed for their administrative roles. Men had conducted their entire careers in one district (20%) more frequently than women (4%), and men were more likely (47%) to be hired into their first administrative positions in the districts in which they were employed as teachers than were women (37%). Both of these sets of figures point to a greater level of comfort and acceptance afforded to males than to females by the districts in which they teach.

5. Men and women also differ in their reasons for entering teaching as a profession. Twenty-five percent of men reported being encouraged by coaches to go into teaching, and another 7% reported that they saw teaching as a way to continue their interest in athletics. No women reported either of these reasons. Only males noted that they decided to become teachers because they admired the life style rather than the professional activity of their teachers--saw their homes, clothing, cars, friends, etc. as a step up.

6. Only men mentioned ease of access to the field and to university courses along with cost manageability as influential factors. Only women, on the other hand, chose teaching because they had always wanted to be teachers. Wolmen also entered teaching in large numbers after preparing for work in liberal arts fields where little was open to them.

7. Men and women also differ in terms of their reasons for moving from the teaching role to one of administrator. Over 50% of the men were tapped by their superiors for administrative jobs, significantly more than the 37.5% of the women. While 15% of the men reported that they had entered education intending to be administrators, none of the women indicated this, thus confirming the perception that women enter education to teach. Men (38%) more frequently than women (16%) indicated a desire for an expanded sphere of influence, increased salary (27% vs. 12%), and desire for an organizational promotion (10% and 0% respectively). These factors suggest that men sought administrative roles for greater status more frequently than did women.

Women, on the other hand, more often expressed a desire for greater challenge (12% of women and 5% of men) and noted the enjoyment of early leadership experiences (24% of women and 7% of men)as reasons to seek administrative positions.

The differences noted here, including the facts that women enter administration with more teaching experience than men, that they are more likely to go into a staff position prior to a line position as a new entrant into the field of administration, and that they view the teaching role in education more positively than men, all help to explain what may underly fundamentally different approaches to the leadership of schools. Contrary to the popular belief that few women are qualified for positions of administration, they enter the ranks with *more* career maturity and experience. They also appear to seek administrative positions for less self-serving reasons than do men, and for reasons more positively related to teaching and learning. It is difficult not to conclude at this point that more experience in education and leadership and more positive feelings about those experiences would lead to more effective leadership of the public schools.

Regarding their perceptions of the help they received in gaining new administrative positions, men and women gave significantly different reports. Women reported more support (67%) from superordinates than men did (37%). More obvious differences were noted in the nature of the suppport offered to the members of the two groups. Men claimed to have received more information on jobs and more help in preparing application materials and getting ready for interviews. They reported feedback on job performance and expressions of confidence as supportive strategies more frequently than did women, and they indicated more frequently that hiring administrators were willing to take a risk on them despite their inexperience. Women, on the other hand, reported significantly more nominations for open positions, more

opportunities afforded in which they might develop their knowledge, skills, and responsibilities in preparation for a new job, and more help in network building.

In total women reported more support in seeking new jobs than the men in the study. Men reported only about 82% as many kinds of support as did women. One can conclude either that women get more support or they give more credit for the support they get than did the men.

Subjects in this study were also asked about the support they received for professional growth. Differences in male and female reports are best indicated by the fact that the women on the average each indicated 2 sources of support and 3 types of support, whereas the men each listed 1.5 sources and 1.3 types of support. Again one can conclude that women either receive or recognize support more frequently than men.

Specific differences in the responses of men and women include the following:

8. More men (19%) than women (0%) reported that their professional growth was entirely self-directed. Other studies have suggested that men tend to see themselves as responsible for their success more than women do.

9. Females recognized their superordinates as sources of development (60%) significantly more often than men (24%).

10. Approximately 33% of the females referred to a mentor as a source of support for professional growth, but less than 3% of the males mentioned having a mentor.

11. Many women (71%) mentioned affiliative acts as supportive of professional growth--joint projects, sharing, mentoring, emotional safety, support groups. Men mentioned these support strategies significantly less often (19%).

12. Only women (16%) saw being sought for advice as a kind of support for professional development.

Clearly the responses of the women differ from the men's responses in that they recognize much more support. First, they did not deny the existence of support as did a considerable number of the men. Second, all of their responses have inherent in them the concepts of affiliation and relationship. The overwhelming female focus on supportive acts and what might be construed as recognition of team play in both their attempts to attain new positions and their efforts to increase their professional skills are obvious. On the one hand,we talk about the commonly held perception that women don't know how to relate to others in the organization (Heller, 1988) and on the other we have evidence of this affiliative and interpersonal priority. Clearly this contradiction raises significant questions about the validity of perceptions as sources of information and a basis for action.

Gilligan's Research

From her study of women and girls, Gilligan reports that women are more tolerant of rules, more willing to make exceptions, more willing to accept innovation, and less competitive. She observes their overriding concern to be with relationships, and reports that they judge themselves in terms of their ability to care.

Gilligan goes on to argue that women view aggression as the outcome of the hierarchical construction of human relationships and that because they put relationships ahead of rules, they tend to have a more contextual mode of making judgments. She reports that women tend to focus on the resolution of the real as opposed to hypothetical dilemmas. She speaks to the issue of boys' practice for their rule-governed adult world through the playing of games. Her position is consistent with that of Pitcher and Schultz (1983) who report observational data in Boys and Girls at Play to demonstrate the propensity of boys for fantasy play while girls play at those roles they will most probably assume as adults. She is perhaps most all-encompassing in her description of women's ways of looking at the world when she writes that they

. .give rise to the ethics of justice and care, the ideals of human relationship--the vision that self and other will be treated as of equal worth, that despite differences in power, things will be fair; the vision that everyone will be responded to and included, that no one will be left alone or hurt. These disparate visions in their tension reflect the paradoxical truths of human experience--that we know ourselves as separate only insofar as we live in connection with others, and that we experience relationship only insofar as we differentiate other from self. (p. 62).

Gilligan summarizes her position by saying that ". . . the moral judgments of women differ from those of men in the greater extent to which women's judgments are tied to feelings of empathy and compassion." (p. 69). Men have developed their definition of the successful judgment in a context of effectiveness and distance, whereas women's views are created in an environment of intimacy. Closely related to the process of education for participation in a democratic community is women's conflict between rights and responsibility. Women encounter the conflict between making judgments on the basis of rights which has inherent an adversarial situation on the one hand and the need to be supportive and nurturing of all people on the other hand. Gilligan contends that women recognize that decisions are ethical only when special circumstances are taken into account, that is when the distance is eradicated in favor of intimacy. Gilligan (1982) summarizes her findings from her interviews with her research subjects in saying

> Thus in all of the women's descriptions, identity is defined in a context of relationship and judged by a standard of responsibility and care. Similarly, morality is seen by these women as arising from the experience of connection and conceived as a problem of inclusion rather than one of balancing claims....For the men, the tone of identity is different, clearer, more direct, more distinct and sharp-edged. Even when disparaging the concept itself, they radiate the confidence of certain truth. Although the world of the self that men describe at times includes "people" and "deep attachments," no particular person or relationship is mentioned, nor is the activity of relationship portrayed in the context of self-description. Replacing the women's verbs of attachment are adjectives of separation--"intelligent," "logical," "imaginative," "honest," sometimes even "arrogant" and "cocky." Thus the male "I" is defined in separation, although the men speak of having "real contacts" and "deep emotions" or otherwise wishing for them. (pp.160-161).

Men's language reveals that they subjugate relationships to achievement; they focus on separation from their relationships for the sake of achievement, and in those cases where they do speak of relationships, they use descriptors related to achievement, i.e. the relationships were "successes" or "failures."

Gilligan takes her discussion of the differences in men's and women's ways of thinking to the point of demonstrating that women are more concerned about both sides of a relationship and thus are much more likely to recognize interdependence in general and certainly more likely to perceive that they themselves are interdependent.

Conclusions

The ways in which women see their entry into education and movement from teacher to administrator, especially as these processes are contrasted with the parallel events for men, are reflected in Gilligan's explications of women's ways of thinking about moral dilemmas. Women's career views and ways of thinking are also compatible with the goals of democratic schooling. Among those points of compatibility are:

13. Women's selection of teaching as the work of choice and priority in the educational field insures their continuing emphasis on this aspect of the educational endeavor.

14. The greater experience and maturity of women (over men) upon their entry into the leadership role in education suggests that they know the instructional business better.

15. Women's tendency to have practiced leadership in roles related to curriculum and teaching prior to assumption of the principalship.reaffirms their priority on instruction.

16. Women's choice of the leadership role because they enjoyed leadership as opposed to the men who opted for a move from teaching because they saw administration as hierarchically more advanced suggests that a very different motivation may continue to guide their actions in the leadership role.

17. Women's reporting of significantly more support from others, including their superordinates, in achieving new administrative positions and continuing their professional development suggests a recognition and valuing of more relationships than men acknowledge.

18. Women's actual naming of a mentor--one who modeled and developed--far more often than men is another indicator of the emphasis on relationships.

19. Women's greater emphasis on affiliative acts as sources of professional support suggests the value they place on such integrative behaviors.

Women's priority on human relationships, care, responsibility, equity, fairness, inclusion, intimacy, interdependence, and cooperation are the very essence of a democratic community. That women as principals hold these values and construct their roles on the foundation they make promises a learning structure and content that is far different from the traditional males school organization.

The counterpoint of two school principals who recently described their roles and themselves illustrates the differences identified in both pieces of research. The woman described her greatest achievements in terms of efforts to guide the staff to a consensus on the development of strategies for managing students in the building; she spoke to her efforts to be a part of her staff, to take part of their burdens, to be *with* them. In response to a question about what made her effective, she mentioned her patience and her commitment to working through a process so that everyone was a part of it. She spoke repeatedly of the students always being her ultimate concern and of how she constructed a vision of the role of the staff and herself which was based on support of the students. While she lamented the fact that she might have to hold a sick child for two hours because there was no one else to care for the child, she made it clear that she never considered not giving that care to the child. The man on the other hand described himself as engaged in activities in which he was alone and above, giving direction to others, and making decisions about others. He reported an effort to be in the hall at the time of change of classes so that students could see that he was there, and he saw his most important role as performing information searches for his staff. He noted that he was successful because he had a strong ego and knew that he had something to offer to his staff.

The overriding differences in these two commentaries focus on intimacy versus distance, the real and immediate (sick child) versus the abstract (information sources); and the concern for relationships versus the concern for tasks. In these two cases, the functional structure of the schools will differ. Information flow and decision-making will vary with the values of the leader. And these differences in organizational structure will affect the interpersonal and instructional structures teachers will create in their classrooms.

If a school is to provide an environment where the students are to learn democracy, then it must first construct an environment where the staff practices democracy. Such an environment is one where care and responsibility for the relationships among the human participants in the community are foremost. For it is out of that environment that students emerge with the strength to join questions, observations, technical skills, and emotions to design their own visions of a larger

community that values education as an endless performance choreographed by the dancers themselves.

References

Gilligan, C. (1982). In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Gips, C. J. (1988). Selection of secondary school assistant principals: Selected case studies. High School Journal, (71)4, 167-177.

Gips, C. J. (1989, January). The role of university faculty as career helpers for aspiring public school administrators. Paper presented at the Second Annual Conference for Women in Higher Education, San Diego, CA.

Giroux, H. A. (1983). Theory and resistance in education: A pedagogy for the opposition. South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey Publishers.

Gutmann, A. (1983). Democratic education. Princeton: Princeton Univesity Press.

Heller, L. The last angry men? What men really feel about working with women. Executive Female, 11(5), 35-38.

Sizer, T. R. (1985). Horace's compromise: The dilemma of the American h igh school. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Stevens, E. and Wood. G. (1987). Justice, ideology and education. New York: Random House.

Valverde, L. (1974). Succession socialization: Its influence on school administrative candidates and its implications to the exclusion of minorities from administration. Washington, D. C. National Institute of Education.